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THE FUNCTION OF MUSICAL CRITICISM

By W. J. HENDERSON

IN the age of analysis and introspection we probe all things. If we are disposed but little to philosophical contemplation and much to the materialistic scrutiny of physical science, our results are perhaps none the less valuable. Sooner or later the supremacy of the inductive method of reasoning is bound to enforce itself, and upon the observation of our patiently acquired array of cold fact we are incited to rear an edifice of codified law. That in the end we subject the very process itself to the operation of its own methods is inevitable. Criticism must above all things be self-critical, lest it mistake its own purpose.

In the popular mind criticism occupies a vague position and enjoys a very tenuous respect. It is judged not by ultimate, but by immediate results. The dramatic critic goes to the first performance of a new play, writes a comment perhaps none too favorable for the next morning's journal, and on the third night the theatre is full. *Ergo* the critic has failed and the worthlessness of his office is once more happily demonstrated. The music critic declares that the creations of Richard Strauss are not of the order of genuine art. Straightway they are performed all over the world and applauded rapturously. Once more the inefficiency of criticism is proved.

With proper esteem for critical commentary I submit that all this is entirely aside from its ultimate purpose. Even the writings of some who have taken the trouble to turn upon this profession the light of reflection have not altogether cleared up the matter. An American scholar of fine literary sensitiveness, William C. Brownell, has put forth a thin volume on criticism. He declares that it is the expression of the concrete in terms of the abstract. "It is its function to discern and characterize the abstract qualities informing the concrete expression of the artist." In the opinion of Mr. Brownell criticism is required to go behind the creation to the mind of the creator. It must inquire in what measure this mind has mastered its own conception and how far the art (which

is the creator's system of expression) has been able to communicate it to the world. Nor should it stop here, for in the last instance it is compelled to consider the value of the conception itself. As far as this, the more intelligent part of a limited public, genuinely interested in art, is willing to follow criticism. But unfortunately it is in this way that radical error achieves its conquest. For so long as we confine ourselves to the consideration of this man or that woman and the complete expression of an exclusively personal idea, so long shall we remain on the lower levels of the domain of art. Mr. Brownell has not made the mistake of leaving his readers in the comfort of their own complacency. He has pointed out as the largest of all functions of criticism the duty of "establishing and determining the relation of art and letters to the life that is their substance and their subject as well." I am of the opinion that even this definition does not fully set forth the high office of criticism. This office is obscured because there is so little room for its exercise.

As known and understood in this country musical criticism is a department in the complicated service of the daily newspaper. The critic, harnessed to the chariot of the press, is no brother of Pegasus, but rather of the more humble steed that draws the early milk wagon to the consumer's door. What he brings, you take with your coffee. He is but a polite newsmonger, permitted in the routine of his day to make his bow before you and say: "Yesterday Mistress Farrar was in prodigious spirit and her song was vastly diverting" or "Were you at Mr. Kneisel's concert of chamber music last night? I do assure it was admirably prepared. My Lady Smith and Lord Jones applauded right heartily." And this is criticism as the man in the street knows it. Small wonder that he discredits it.

But even when it rises to clearer heights and attempts a wide survey of a new composition, a survey in which the discernment of the operation of the artist mind behind the work must surely be sought, even here the restrictions of the professional gossip are not to be removed. But by taking thought and stemming opposition with a heart of controversy some may contrive to rise above the conventions of the newspaper and compel the reader to think of something larger than the mere personal triumph of the artist or the possible popularity of the new opera.

Whether these critics have formulated a theory of their art or not, their practise thrusts forward certain features which furnish a basis for definition. The daily occupations of musical criticism are indeed manifold; but as it is deducible from the methods

of the best commentators on both sides of the western ocean, its ultimate function is to measure musical art by the standard of the thought of its time.

This is not a simple postulate; it is rather a summary of basic laws. But it sets forth a vital principal which must govern all critical commentary worthy of esteem. The commentator who carries the art work away into the seclusion of his own spiritual paradise, and, shut out from the raging of the heathen or the confusion of jarring sects, seeks to saturate his soul with its meaning as a purely monastic creation, serves no real end. He may glorify his own ego and indirectly pander to the vanity of the artist, but he is out of tune with the world and ciphers in the computation of humanity. He may preen himself upon the chastity of his thoroughly dispassionate speculation, but he is one of the futilities. What Walter Pater said is truth:

The true illustration of the speculative temper is not the Hindoo mystic, lost to sense, understanding and individuality, but one such as Goethe, to whom every moment of life brought its contribution of experimental individual knowledge, by whom no touch of the world of form, color and passion was disregarded.

And note that the key to this attitude of Goethe is its intense alertness, its candor in facing the beautiful as an integral factor of daily life. This brings us to the necessity of considering what must precede in the criticizing mind the measurement of the art work by the standard of its time. Since the creation places itself always in front of the creator, since only from it can we eventually deduce our understanding of him, it follows that criticism finds itself first of all in the presence of a tangible embodiment of an intangible conception, and that its first effort is to recognize the art work as the adequate presentation or realization of an art ideal.

There has never been any period in the development of the art of music when this portion of the function of criticism was of more importance than it is at this moment. For it is obvious that criticism to-day cannot confine itself to the brilliancy of the technical achievement nor even to the absolute beauty of the music as such, because the composer of to-day refuses to write music dissociated from some ideal lying outside the art itself. His incessant effort is to raise or lower music to the estate of a representative art. Herein he seeks to evade the responsibility which should stand always before him of worshipping his art for its own sake.

Music is the most complete and self reliant of the arts. It has no utilitarian purpose, like architecture; it never, like literature,

becomes a treasure chest for the archives of history. Despite Wagner's exhilarating interpretation of the Seventh Symphony as "the apotheosis of the dance," that composition remains an absolute symphony in A major, capable of resting wholly upon its own musical beauty. A suite by Bach can live a thing of beauty and a joy forever, even while it calmly defies every attempt to create for it any foundation outside its own thematic materials. Mozart's concertos and the symphonies of Brahms belong in this same class. All their eloquence consists in lofty song. They tell no stories; they paint no pictures; they make no futile essays at preaching philosophies.

The critic who sets himself to the estimate of such music thinks only of music, that unapproachable art in which the form and the substance are wed in perfect union. But when he scrutinizes the music of the contemporaneous period, he finds an art ideal wholly different. He is compelled to accept, as it were, a double standard. He must first consider whether the art ideal which is to receive tangible expression is in itself beautiful and indeed musical at all, and second whether the expression constitutes an artistic product. And in bending his mind to this second consideration, he is inevitably forced back to the primal condition of the tone art. He must ask himself whether the thing is beautiful as a musical composition regardless of its relation to the extraneous thoughts which the composer's title or programme seeks to associate with it.

Perhaps it is exceeding the boundaries of this essay to make an example of any particular musician; yet a purpose may be served by doing so. The career of Richard Strauss has been glorified by wide and brilliant public success. It has been followed by excited and varied critical comment, much of which has wholly missed the mark simply because the commentators have seldom succeeded in separating the two fundamental elements of his art. They have accepted an extraordinary power of expression as a demonstration of the existence of a first rate genius.

The operation of this type of criticism is one sided. It has caused failure to perceive the high success of Strauss in the fashioning of a logical musical form, as in his "Heldenleben," and at the same time has neglected to notice the narrow range of musical ideas set forth in the composition and also the cheap egotism of its pretended philosophy. Musicians wax rhapsodic when they talk of "Don Quixote," whereas the work is palpably nothing but an excessively smart piece of orchestral virtuosity. Precisely the same things might be said of the operas of Puccini,

which are without question achievements in the highest regions of theatrical technic.

However, let us not be so far turned aside from the path of our discussion as to make comments on lyric dramas, for these lie furthest from the soul of true musical art. It remains incontestable today, as it has for centuries past, that the best music is that which is nothing but music. Next to that stands the music which unites with poetry in the purest and simplest of composite forms, the song. So to return to the delineative tone poems of Strauss as examples, we must be convinced that in studying such art criticism finds its function rather complex. The embodiment of the intangible ideal is overwhelmingly clever at first sight; but protracted contemplation of the art work satisfies us that it is cleverness, not the utterance of genius, that confronts us. Even the cleverness is not sustained, nor of cohesive texture. It is rather a series of feats, each accomplished by violent effort, and joined by ingeniously prepared illusion. For the public it is instantaneous. The public sees only the success of the moment. Its clamor of approval is for "the man of the hour." Criticism should seek only for the man of the age.

But before soaring to this highest flight of its reconnaissance it must try the artist before the tribunal of his own art. Is the thing music? Alas, then comes that eternal question, What is music? And no question is more perplexing. The performing musicians have one ideal; the teachers another, the theorists a third. The public has none, and criticism vainly seeks for one to thrust upon it. "*Le roi s'amuse*," is the war cry of the public. The average composer, like Autolycus, "hath songs for man or woman, of all sizes." When, therefore, the contemplative eye of criticism falls upon a master who follows the inner light of his own genius, who believes with all the flaming force of an almost fanatic faith in the eternal verity of his artistic creed and recks not whether the present welcomes him or not, then indeed must its scrutiny be directed with special care. For to commune only with one's own spirit and to believe utterly in one's own fancies does not necessarily mean that one is another Bach.

Music, like the other arts, addresses itself to some one—not exclusively to its own maker, nor yet to a few kindred souls. Art which cannot reach a public is without life. It is futile for the composer or the poet to sit like Prentice's Napoleon "wrapped in the solitude of his own originality." Yet there is after all no great difficulty in discovering the line of demarcation between the man who follows and the man who leads the public. The former

prostrates himself at the feet of his audience; the latter preaches from the pulpit of art with irresistible eloquence. In considering the product of the man whose eyes are ever fixed on the altar of art and who perhaps demands readier sympathy than the public can give, the position of criticism may become unassailable, or at any rate tremendously helpful. Is it Music? Not, is it the kind of music Beethoven or Mozart or Tschaikowsky wrote; but is it music, founded imperishably on the immutable laws of art? That is the test, and whether he shelters himself behind the classic ramparts of the old masters or storms the strange harmonic heights held by the Schoenbergs and the Debussys, by this test every master must stand or fall.

And it is the application of this standard which inevitably brings criticism to the consideration of the second great item in its catalogue, namely, the reconstruction of the artist. The permanence of the work of any artist rests largely upon the heroism of his personality. It cannot rest wholly upon it, for the art work must in the end stand by itself. But suppose a man were asked to determine who would in all probability exert the wider and deeper and more lasting influence on the development of opera, Verdi or Puccini. The answer without doubt would be in favor of the former because the artistic power and value of his work was inseparably interwoven with the profound sincerity of his nature. Puccini, on the other hand, pairs with Strauss in the cunning use of a highly finished technic to achieve immediate public success.

In the study of such a figure as Anton Bruckner there is food for tears, for surely musical history has no more pathetic hero than this. Of his religious faith in his own ideals one cannot have an instant of doubt. Of his mastery of the method of expression, on the other hand, there is ground for question on almost every page. Yet the reconstruction of the artist from his art compels us to deep respect. We recognize a large, a noble nature, laboring in all the futile agony of uninspired intellectual drudgery to fashion into perfect architecture materials which could be shaped only by the sudden blaze of inspiration. Human sympathy, brotherly love, these clamor for exercise in the presence of such gigantic struggles to compass that which the mind seeks, but the soul cannot bring to birth. Missing is that strange impalpable seed, that unseen impregnating fluid which we call genius. Mozart once jotted down a thematic subject and on referring to it later, made a marginal note: "Nothing will come of that." The unerring insight of his genius told him that he could not develop his theme. If

Bruckner and some of his followers had faced candidly the barrenness of some of their ideas, we should have been spared a vast amount of pity and many pages of pointless modulation.

Yet it was by the labors of such recluse minds as his that the foundations of modern instrumental music were laid. M. Rolland in his "*Musiciens d'Autrefois*" has pointed to them:

The treasures of faith and energy accumulating themselves in silence; characters simple and heroic; the admirable Heinrich Schütz, who during the Thirty Years War, in the midst of the worst disasters which had ever devastated a country, continued peaceably to chant his faith, robust, grandiose, unshakable; around him Jean Christophe Bach, Jean Michael Bach, ancestors of the great Bach, who seemed to carry in themselves the tranquil presentiment of the genius which should issue from them; Pachelbel, Kuhnau, Buxtehude, Zachow, Erlebach—great souls shut all their lives within the narrow circle of a little town or province, known to a handful of men, without ambition, without hope of surviving, singing for themselves alone and for their God and who, among all the sorrows private and public amassed slowly, obstinately, reserves of force and moral health, building stone upon stone the future grandeur of Germany.

These were organists and the service of the church vitalized their powers, as it afterward did those of the "great Bach." But in later years the urgent necessity of the appeal to the public became a dominating force in the development of our art. The composer, no longer an organist, emerged from the cloister and battled with the multitude of hucksters in the public market place. And here we may study him. Händel writing perfectly conventionalized operas for a flat-minded audience, Haydn courting the favor of princes and potentates with symphonies not too long, nor too broad, nor too deep; Beethoven defying at the same instant aristocratic patrons and the rules of theorists, Mendelssohn, an infant prodigy retaining his charming juvenility till the end.

The man and the music, the music and the man: these stand and fall together and thus the magic spell of human interest attaches itself to every page of score.

It is at this point, too, that we are confronted by the demand of the interpretative artist. Of this any one who places the function of criticism upon a high plane would wish to say very little. The consideration of the performer is the least important office of real criticism; but unfortunately it is the one on which the public lays the largest attention. You may write many pages assailing the fame of Beethoven and no one will take issue with you; but expose the paltry pretenses of some third rate opera singer and the vials of wrath are opened.

But brave and independent criticism does not care whether the people rage and the heathen imagine a vain thing. Its duty in regard to performance is plain and simple. It must seek for the existence of creative force, for that unconquerable personal power which raises a pianist or a violinist to the rank of preacher of the gospel of Beethoven or Chopin, the opera singer to that of ambassador of Verdi or Wagner. All that lies below this level is but a matter for the routine record of the day. It comes from the east; it sinks into the west; the rest is darkness. Where it was there is nothing, not even a memory.

Yet it is over such filamentous trifles that the daily newspapers for numerous reasons (chiefly the desire of their readers), spend much ink. Popularity here works havoc with the perspectives of the newspaper. Little singers, whose singing is of no more importance in the world of real art than the chirping of a cricket in the vast scheme of Nature, are accorded long spaces of foolish laudation merely because they have a certain public following. Two score pianists parade their technic in the course of a single New York season and thirty-five of them read Beethoven's sonatas as the leading man of a college dramatic society might act *Hamlet*. But each must be gravely pondered, weighed and investigated despite the fact that there is nothing to consider beyond agility of finger, sensitiveness of touch, and perhaps also a feeling for color. But no more of this. It is enough to say that criticism of performance has fulfilled its office when it proclaims to the world the existence of a real interpretative organism, a mind and a technic capable of recreating the art of a master.

To return then to the loftier duty, that of studying the originating soul and its product, we must once more lay emphasis on the asseveration that the ultimate function of criticism is the discernment and appreciation of the art work in its relation to the spirit of its time. What, then, becomes of immortal fame? Well, in the first place it is extremely doubtful that such a thing exists. Certainly musical art is so young that no one dare predict the indestructibility of any creation brought forth up to the present. But granting that immortality can be attained, one thing is perfectly certain, and that is that it is never gained by deliberately setting out in pursuit of it. The man who enslaves himself to so vague an object cannot become free, and only a free mind can create great things.

But he who is aflame with the thought of his own time and who is urged night and day by irresistible forces to strive for its expression, he is the man upon whom the world will in the end bestow the

title of master. Large or small in type his work may be; that matters not. The Providence of art watches the fall of the sparrow, too. A pretentious epic sinks into obscurity and a three-stanza lyric goes singing itself down the pathways of the centuries. A folk song, bred in the puissant loins of unconscious parenthood, marches in the highways and trumpets the thought of a people and an epoch. Where is the composer who can imprison the mood of such a song? For him the laurel and the glory. "Every reform," says Emerson, "was once a private opinion, and when it shall be a private opinion again, it will solve the problem of the age." Every art reform was once a private opinion and when it becomes every one's private opinion it is merged in the spirit of its time and puts on immortality.

If a man writes not for a time, but for all time, it is because he is filled full to the very lips with the essence of his own period. The supereminence of every mastercreation of humanity is proof of it. The Parthenon stands a deathless monument on the summit of the Acropolis because it breathes the spirit of the age of Pericles. It offers no single line that springs parallel with the feeling of today, yet it dominates the modern world of art. Is this, as is frequently said, because it is a perfect embodiment of the Grecian soul? To assert this is to deal in vagueness. What thrusts itself before us oftenest as the type of the Greek soul? It is the Greek of the decadence, rather than the triumphant hero of the Periclean Athens. The latter was not specifically the worshipper of Pan, or Bacchus or even the three-formed huntress. He was a disciple of Athena Parthenos. Because this matchless piece of architecture proclaims more brilliantly than any song or history the lordly pose of the age of young intellect in Athens, it stands even yet the epitome of a mighty yesterday risen from the dead and made part of eternity.

The Persian war had raised Athens to the zenith of commercial and political prosperity. She was queen of the Mediterranean. A thousand miles of Asia Minor coast lay subject to her hand; her galleys plowed through all the midland seas; her store houses were fat with the golden plenty of the East. Rich and powerful, she expressed herself in pure art which made her walls unbroken lines of splendor. She published herself in the mellow accents of Athenian oratory. She became the seat of philosophical thought and to her flocked the sages of Ionia, Italy, Egypt and Asia Minor. All were weighed and tested, and Athenian thought centered itself in that higher analysis which ushered in the mighty age of reason in Greece, the age of Socrates. In such a time, then, Pericles, himself

a human embodiment of it, set upon the Acropolis an art work which unites, as no other in all the world, pure beauty with solidity, architectural sentiment with the serene pose of calm intellectuality. It is the very soul of the Periclean Athens carved in stone.

This is a swift and passing view of an immortal art work in relation to its time. Had the genius of Ictinus and Callicrates failed to grasp the nature of the problem set them when they essayed to create a temple for the soul of Athens as typified in the heroic figure from the chisel of Pheidias, the Parthenon would not have held its supremacy among the architectural works of man. It was not alone that perfection of its plan, nor the exquisite adjustment of its details that made it triumphant. It was its complete and satisfying expression of its time.

The ancient chant of the Roman church is to this day what M. Gevaert has eloquently called it, "Christianity's cry of triumph after two centuries and a half of persecution." The impulse given to church music in that period preserved enough of its vitality twelve centuries later to enrich the liturgy with the last great works of Palestrina, the expiring songs of Gothic music sung by one of the rare and pure souls maintaining its spiritual and artistic chastity amid the church's carnival of material aggrandizement and fleshly indulgence.

Bach signifies a thousandfold more than he is usually represented as signifying in the seclusion of conservatories. Without doubt the technical aspects of his art are of absorbing interest and of vital import in the history of music. But they are too often permitted to obscure the deeper and loftier meaning of his creation. To have analyzed to the last element the system of composition which depended upon the texture of parallel lines of consonant melody, to have discerned with marvellous musical intuition the method of transferring to instruments the scheme of this vocal polyphony, and to summarize in the faultless logic and architectural beauty of the North German fugue the entire musical heritage of the decadent cathedral music of the south was indeed a stupendous musical achievement, and in itself entitled Bach to sit with the Titans.

But one must connote with this the Passions, the Christmas Oratorio, the motets, the cantatas and the characteristic organ chorales and face squarely the element of fundamental chord harmony which so deeply and powerfully differentiates them from the exclusively fugal works. It was in the marriage of the choral and the fugue, two musical elements representing mortally hostile factions in the church, that Bach laid some of the foundations

of modern tonal art; and he did this in seeking for an expression, which, when found, made him the typical exponent of the religious spirit of his time.

It is no more difficult to connect Beethoven and Schubert with the thought of their time, but on the contrary it is imperative that it should be done in order to complete the survey of their art. Beethoven, the revolutionary, the composer of the third, fifth and ninth symphonies "Fidelio" and the "Missa Solemnis," was no more faithful to the spirit of political unrest which was moving across Europe than Beethoven, the idyllic, composing the fourth, sixth and seventh symphonies, "An die ferne Geliebte" and the early quartets, was to the wave of literary romanticism which floated the exquisite lyrics of Schubert.

And in the bold adventure of Beethoven into new forms, new methods of expression and a new development of the technic of musical detail, the contemplative observer may find a spirit akin to that of the Encyclopedists, who purposed to reform human information, or of Jean Jacques Rousseau whose "Contrat Social" was an endeavor to correct human society's erroneous view of its own constitution and whose "Savoyard Vicar's Confession of Faith" was an essay at exposing the frailty of Roman Catholicism. It was an age of scepticism and revolt and the last quartets of Beethoven were among its fruits as surely as the French Revolution was.

It is not necessary to pursue instances further. But perchance this is the point at which we may pause for a moment to inquire whether the composers of our own day do not suffer from the utter want of a point of view. Or shall we not possibly be forced to declare that some of them profit by it? Have we some composers who suffer from intellectual asceticism, who are unconsciously living outside of the world about them? Or have we others who, incapable of understanding and expressing the spirit of their own time, are nevertheless governed by its less ennobling impulses? The study of one's own time, as already intimated, is a large undertaking, and a small mind is sure to seize on the smallest matters. On the other hand it should be candidly acknowledged that the majority of composers are not essaying such large creations that they can be expected to walk hand in hand with Shakespeare, Michel Angelo, or Schubert. The majority cannot be expected to do more than strike notes which fully harmonize with their time. The musician who does this is not to be put aside as unworthy of exhaustive critical consideration. He may not excite transports, but he will assuredly arouse interest.

It will be urged, and with reason, that the appreciation of a man's work as an embodiment of the spirit of his age is almost impossible to his contemporaries. We do not grasp the meaning of our own time, but are we entirely ignorant of it? Is it not the duty of criticism to look beyond the confines of the art of which it treats? There cannot be any man who has earnestly practised the calling of music critic and who has not arrived at the conviction that nothing human is foreign to him. The more he knows about things outside of music the better qualified he is to discern the significance of a musical art work. And the broader his vision, the higher his point of view, the more will he enter into the spirit of his time.

It is not essential that he should seek to fix the final standing of an art work according to his own conception of his period. Perspectives of all types, and particularly the historical, alter views. But criticism is in duty bound to stand upon the firm foundation of historical scholarship and to rear thereupon an edifice of comment which shall command a clear perspective. If there is probability that contemporaneous criticism may err as to the place of Reger or Debussy in the art world, it is less likely to blunder about the position of Mozart or Donizetti. By close study of the relation of the masters of by gone periods to the spirit of their times one may reach at least a helpful consideration of the relation of the writers of today to their time.

Criticism must do its own work. The musical historians have with one accord treated of the art as if it had grown up in a cloister, secluded from human life and absolutely disconnected from it. It is only occasionally that some wiser scholar, like M. Gevaert, lifts into the sunlight one of the glittering links which chain music to the heels of human progress. It is only rarely that some larger thinker, like M. Rolland, out of the fullness of a liberal intelligence writes of the place of music in history.

The critic who desires to get a sound point of view must trace for himself the connection between music and human life. If a man wishes to penetrate to the intellectual impulses which lay behind the musical composition of the first polyphonic period, he must not content himself with the indolent generalization that this type of art was the product of mechanical experiment by men who had not yet a technic ready to their hands. He will learn far more if he will seek for the intellectual influences which lay outside of music itself but which dominated the thinking of men in that day. He will need to pass through the gates of the University of Paris and saturate his mind with the thought of that institution,

which was then the intellectual law giver of Europe. But he will not be able to acquire this information from histories of music.

In the process of the decades some one will have to confront the incontestable fact that Germany has produced no creative musician since Brahms. We of this hour may tremble at the thoughts which crowd upon us, which seem unavoidable in the presence of the embattled nations of Europe. We wisely hesitate to attempt to trace the connection between the dominance of the military spirit and the conquest of Europe by a composer who frankly confesses—indeed even boasts—that commercial supremacy is the goal of his ambition. But if we admit with much relief that the burden of this task must descend to our successors, we cannot altogether blind our eyes to flaming truth. We are bound to see that the radical defect of the musical art of our own time is its determination to be popular. Certainly, as has already been said, no one can expect composers to set out with the resolve that they will do nothing toward the favor of the people. But is there not at this moment too much readiness to feed fat its idle prejudices?

Writing of Puccini, Vernon Blackburn declares that he is “essentially the man of his own generation—the one who has caught up the spirit of his time and made his compact with that time in order that he should not lose anything which a contemporary generation might give him.” Whereupon Lawrence Gilman adds: “That is to say, he has, with undoubted artistic sincerity, played upon the insatiable desire of the modern ear for an ardent and elemental kind of melodic effect and upon the acquired desire of the modern intelligence for a terse and dynamic substratum of the drama.”

One applauds fervently the valorous planting of these critical standards upon the bastions of the *Zeitgeist*. At the same instant one is lost in wonder at the position thus gained. No higher summary of any man's life accomplishment can be made than to say that he is “essentially a man of his own generation—the one who has caught up the spirit of his time.” No more can be said of Pericles, of Savonarola, of Mantegna, of Thackeray, of Lincoln. But there is room for much inquiry as to how Mr. Gilman reconciles Puccini's artistic sincerity with his brilliantly successful skill in playing upon an “insatiable desire of the modern ear.”

It is by putting forth such a critical summary as this that the critic perhaps seeks to pair himself with the moment. Honest and earnest indeed as both the quoted writers have long ago proved themselves to be, in discussing this lyric magician they fear to place themselves in a false position. Well indeed may they entertain

such a fear, for who can settle the matter? It does not follow that a composer is inferior because he is popular. Chopin is the most popular of piano composers, and it is conceded that he ranks among the masters. All young people who still read poetry adore Mrs. Browning's "Sonnets from the Portuguese," yet they cannot be excluded from the company of the elect.

The true desideratum, after all, is not the infallibility of criticism. The acquisition of a ready made opinion is sought only by the intellectually incapable or idolent. A real man prefers to think for himself; and the best criticism is that which compels him to do so. Therefore what we should value most in critical commentary is its point of view, its endeavor to attain an altitude from which the whole breadth of the subject may be surveyed. Unfortunately this type of criticism, like the art with which it will be obliged to concern itself, will not command the attention of a large public. It will perforce address itself to the society of the intellectual, and its dearest hope should be to raise music to that station beside literature and painting which that society habitually neglects to give to it.

Despite its wide activity the art of music is still in need of propaganda and of explication. Halting, inadequate, often blundering as it must ever be, critical discussion is still the foremost agent in bringing to the general public a perception of the nature of musical art and of the ends sought by composers. This is none the less true because the major part of the criticism which reaches the public eye is a mere record of the doings of performers. Admitting that such critical commentary is nothing more than the ephemeral record of the passing incident, we shall find that by sheer force of accretion even this increases the general stock of appreciation of that which lies behind the performance. Meanwhile the broader outlooks of such masters of critical practice as Rolland, Dent, Newman and their compeers must inevitably lead men toward a discernment of the organization of musical art.